

CLEAN COPY OF AMENDED AND NEW CLAIMS

3. (Amended) A rail road car bridge plate operable to permit a vehicle to be conducted between respective vehicle decks of a pair of first and second longitudinally coupled rail road cars, said bridge plate comprising:

Q1 a beam locatable in a longitudinal orientation relative to the rail road cars to span a gap therebetween;

said beam having a surface upon which the vehicle can be conducted;

said beam having a fitting by which to mount said beam to the first of the rail road cars;

said fitting being operable to accommodate yawing of said beam relative to the first rail road car when said beam is located in the longitudinal orientation and the rail road cars are in motion; and

said fitting permitting movement of said beam from said longitudinal orientation to a cross-wise orientation relative to the first rail road car when said beam is disengaged from the second rail road car.

4. (Amended) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said fitting is chosen from the set of fittings consisting of

(a) a collar for receiving a pivot pin; and

(b) a pivot pin engageable in a collar;

by which said fitting permits motion of said bridge plate between an extended position spanning a gap between the rail road cars and a storage position.

5. (Amended) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said fitting is a pivot fitting and, when said beam is lying horizontally, said pivot has a predominantly vertical axis.

6. (Amended) The bridge plate of claim 3 wherein said beam has a flange defining said surface, and said fitting is a pivot fitting having a pivot axis perpendicular to said flange.

Q2 13. (Amended) A bridge plate for spanning a length-wise gap between corresponding vehicle decks of a pair of first and second releasably coupled rail road cars, said bridge plate comprising:

a beam member for supporting the weight of a wheeled vehicle, said beam member having an upwardly facing surface upon which the vehicle can be conducted between the rail road cars, said beam having first and second ends;

a first fitting for engaging the first rail road car;

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a second fitting for engaging the second rail road car;
said first fitting being mountable to connect said first end of said beam to the first rail road car, said first fitting permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to the first rail road car about a first axis normal to said surface;
said second fitting being mountable to connect said second end of said beam to the second rail road car, said second fitting permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to the second rail road car about a second axis normal to said surface;
said second fitting being operable to accommodate variation of distance between the first and second axes while said rail road cars are coupled together and in motion and
one of said first and second fittings being disengageable.

Q3

14. (Amended) The bridge plate of claim 13 wherein, when the rail road cars are uncoupled, said second end of said bridge plate is disengageable from the second rail road car, and, when so disengaged, is movable about said first axis to a cross-wise storage position.

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20. (Amended) A bridge plate for spanning a gap between corresponding vehicle decks of a pair of first and second releasably coupled rail road cars, said bridge plate having:
a first pivot fitting mountable to the first rail road car, said pivot fitting permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to the first rail road car about a first vertical axis;
a second fitting for engaging the second rail road car, said second fitting including a linear extension member permitting pivotal motion of said bridge plate relative to a second vertical axis fixed relative to the second rail road car;
said first fitting being tolerant of yaw motion of the bridge plate relative to the first rail road car when said first fitting is mounted thereto;
said second fitting being disengageable relative to the second rail road car;
said second fitting being tolerant of yaw motion of the bridge plate relative to the second rail road car when said second fitting is engaged thereto; and
said linear extension member tolerating variation in distance between the first and second axes.

Q5

24. (Amended) A bridge plate kit for spanning a gap between respective vehicle decks of a pair of first and second releasably coupled rail road cars, said kit comprising:
a bridge plate;

a first pivot pin having a first pivot axis, said first pivot pin being mountable to the first rail road car with said first pivot axis in a vertical orientation;
a second pivot pin having a second pivot axis, said second pivot pin being mountable to the second rail road car with said second pivot axis in a vertical orientation;
and
said bridge plate having
a track surface upon which a vehicle can be conducted between the railroad cars when said bridge plate is mounted to span the gap;
a first fitting in engagement with said first pivot pin, said bridge plate being pivotable relative to said first pivot axis;
a second fitting in engagement with said second pivot pin, said bridge plate being pivotable relative to said second axis;
said bridge plate being translatable relative to said second axis; and
one of said pivot pins being disengageable.

30. (New) The bridge plate kit of claim 24 wherein said disengageable one of said pivot pins is disengageable from its respective rail road car.

31. (New) The bridge plate of claim 24 wherein said disengageable one of said pivot pins is removable disengageable from its respective fitting of said bridge plate.

32. (New) The bridge plate of claim 24 wherein said second pivot pin is said disengageable pivot pin.

33. (New) A bridge plate for a vehicle carrying rail road car, for use in permitting a vehicle to be conducted between respective vehicle decks of a pair of adjacently coupled first and second rail road cars, said bridge plate comprising:

a beam member for extending between the two adjacently coupled railroad cars, the beam member having a first end for engaging the first rail road car, and a second end for engaging the second rail road car;
said beam member having an upper flange, a lower flange, and webs extending between said upper and lower flanges to form a hollow section;
said upper flange of said beam member having a track surface upon which the wheeled vehicle can be conducted;
said first end of said beam member having a pivot fitting mounted thereto;
said pivot fitting permitting movement of said beam about a pivot axis normal to said track surface.

34. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate has three of said webs.

35. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate has a length measured from the first end to the second end and has a lengthwise slot defined in said second end.

36. (New) The bridge plate of claim 35 wherein at least one of said webs lies to either side of said slot.

37. (New) The bridge plate of claim 35 wherein said slot is defined clear through both said upper and lower flanges.

38. (New) The bridge plate of claim 35 wherein said second end of said bridge plate is bifurcated to define a pair of toes, said slot being defined between said toes.

Q6 could 39. (New) The bridge plate of claim 34 wherein said first end is chamfered.

40. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate has at least four of said webs extending parallel to each other, and running lengthwise said first and second ends.

41. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said bridge plate is made of aluminium.

42. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said surface of said upper flange has tread bars affixed thereto.

43. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said lower flange has a plastic bearing pad mounted thereto.

44. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 further comprising a hand grab mounted to said second end thereof to facilitate pivotal manipulation of said beam member relative to said axis.

45. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein one of said pivot pins is removable.

46. (New) The bridge plate of claim 33 wherein said second pivot pin is removable to facilitate disengagement of said bridge plate from the second rail road car.